

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Liiko Nouchi, 62, Dole Company (Hawaiian Pine Company) field forelady

Liiko (Onuma) Nouchi, Japanese, was born in Paauhau, Hawaii on January 15, 1917. Her father was an employee of the Paauhau Sugar Plantation. Because her mother was weak, Mrs. Nouchi performed much of the household chores in their plantation home. She attended Paauhau Elementary School and Japanese school. Later she attended Lanai Elementary and Intermediate School and completed the ninth grade.

When she was 10 years old, her parents moved to Lanai to work in the pineapple fields for Hawaiian Pine Company. Beginning at age 12, she helped her father, mother and brothers out in the fields, cleaning slips and suckers, and cutting crowns off of the pineapples.

In 1934, she married Yaichi Nouchi, a Hawaiian Pine employee, and between 1935 and 1948 had six children.

The Nouchis left Lanai in 1945 and came to Wahiawa's Kipapa-5 Camp. She began working in the pineapple fields in 1950 as a seasonal employee and became a regular employee in 1969. In 1975, she became one of the first women to become a permanent field forelady on Dole Company's Wahiawa plantation.

Still employed today as a field forelady, she lives in Whitmore with her husband. When not working, she enjoys gardening, sewing and cooking, and is a member of the Buddhist Soto Mission and the Whitmore Doshikai.

Tape No. 6-28-1-79 and 6-29-1-79

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

With

Liiko Nouchi (LN)

March 22, 1979

Whitmore, Oahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mrs. Liiko Nouchi. Today is March 22, 1979. We are at her home in Whitmore.

First can you tell me where you were born and when you were born?

LN: January 15, 1917 in Paauhau, Hawaii.

WN: What type of work did your father do?

LN: My father worked for the Paauhau Sugar Plantation.

WN: When did he come over to the Big Island?

LN: Eighteen ninety-eight.

WN: Okay. Did your mother work too out in the fields?

LN: Not until they moved to Lanai.

WN: They moved to Lanai in [1927]?

LN: Yes.

WN: Did you help in the sugar fields at all?

LN: No, too young.

WN: You are the oldest of three children?

LN: Yes.

WN: So you had two younger brothers?

LN: Yes.

WN: What were the kinds of chores that you did around the house?

LN: My father raised a lot of chickens, duck, turkey, pigs so we help him get them grass, gather the eggs,...(fed the animals).

WN: Was he raising it for your own use?

LN: As a hobby, [and] own use too.

WN: Did you sell any of it out?

LN: That, I don't know but all I can remember is my father used to hire some Filipino men and have the pigs slaughtered. I guess that must have been sold. I remember Portuguese ladies coming to our home and make those Portuguese sausages. We used to have a lot of those sausages hanging in our kitchen.

WN: This is on the plantation [at Paauhau]?

LN: Uh huh. [yes]

WN: You were the only girl [in the family]?

LN: Yes.

WN: What chores did you do as compared to the chores that your brothers did?

LN: My mother was very weak and I started washing diapers from when I was six years old. As much as I can help around the house, too.

WN: Do you remember any other things you did? Cooking?

LN: (Laughs) Uh huh. [Yes]

WN: Okay. Did you go to any school at Paauhau?

LN: [Yes]. Paauhau Elementary and Japanese school.

WN: Oh, you also went to Japanese school there and when you moved to Lanai, you continued?

LN: [Yes], both schools.

WN: When you were young, do you remember what you wanted to be when you grew up?

LN: Well, it's just that my parents was such a hard-working parents [and] so [I had] to help around the home. I think that I never thought about it although I wanted to further my education. But being an only girl, my parents never thought of letting me go to another island.

WN: Did they ever tell you what they wanted you to be?

LN: No.

WN: Okay. You moved to Lanai in 1927?

LN: Yes. Ten years old.

WN: Why did your parents move to Lanai?

LN: Even that I don't know.

WN: Okay. They moved from sugar to pine?

LN: Pineapple. Maybe it's because many of their friends moved to Lanai, too, from the same place that we used to live.

WN: So there were many others moving from Paauhau too?

LN: Uh huh, yes.

WN: Do you remember what you were thinking, what your thoughts were about Lanai when you were thinking about moving?

LN: It was a bigger place than the place that we was living in Hawaii and the school was closer.

WN: By "bigger" you mean the camp was bigger?

LN: Yes, that's right.

WN: Do you remember what your house looked like on Lanai?

LN: It's still there. The house is still there. It's really old, plantation-type of home.

WN: How many bedrooms were there?

LN: Two bedrooms. Two bedrooms and a living room, a kitchen and a bathroom.

WN: Did you have any electricity?

LN: Yes, we had electricity (but we had a kerosene stove and a kerosene heater). At first when we moved there, we had a community bath and laundry house. (The camp was divided block-by-block, and each block had its own bathhouse and laundry house. The men and women were separated. It was a huge wooden bathtub -- about 8 feet by 10 feet, and most of the time) we all used to wash together, bathe together.

WN: Do you remember how many people had to use the same bathhouse?

LN: (About 200 people lived in one block).

- WN: You also shared the toilet facilities?
- LN: (But later on we got our own bathtub and flush toilet).
- WN: You mentioned the school was closer?
- LN: Yes.
- WN: Was that the only school in [Lanai]?
- LN: Yes.
- WN: What grade did it go up to?
- LN: When I first moved there, we only had until the ninth grade. Now they have until high school.
- WN: So what if someone wanted to go beyond ninth grade?
- LN: You had to go to another island, to Maui. Because my brother went to Maui, Lahainaluna.
- WN: How about churches?
- LN: We did have Christian, Catholic and Buddhist church. I used to go to a Buddhist church.
- WN: Do you remember any type of recreation that they had over there, picnics, and so forth?
- LN: Yes, those days we enjoyed get-togethers because everybody participated and like class picnic or any Japanese School activities and even the bon dance was such a thing that we looked forward to.
- WN: Were these sponsored by the company?
- LN: No.
- WN: Do you remember any company sponsored?
- LN: I don't think we had any. I can't remember.
- WN: After you came to Lanai, you said that you started working out in the fields as a child?
- LN: [Yes], during the summer.
- WN: Can you remember what you did?
- LN: At first every summer, myself and my two brothers tag along with my mother, early in the morning, carrying lantern and they had this women's job that was trimming the plants [crowns, slips and suckers]. The men would pick the plants and the women trimmed it.

- WN: The plant or the pineapple?
- LN: Pineapple plant and they used to bring it out in the open space, really big open space, and dump the plants. There, my mother and I would just sit down and trim those plants.
- WN: Are you talking about the slip?
- LN: The slips and the crowns and the suckers. (But most of the crowns were already cut with a knife after they were harvested. A few of the crowns had to be trimmed a little.)
- WN: Oh, I see and so when you trim the plant, how did you do that?
- LN: The crowns we have to trim the top, the tip with the knife and then trim some leaves off. The slips, the tip has to be cut off too but [with] a different type of knife. We used to have it [the knife] made on a board, then we just cut it [the nub] off and then trim those leaves too. My mother would cut off the nubs and then me and my brother used to trim the leaves off of the tips. (The nub, located at the bottom of the slip, looks like a tiny pineapple, but it's not. Some slips have nubs and some don't). [See illustration of slip in introduction]
- WN: Do you remember why you had to do that [trim the leaves off the slips]?
- LN: Maybe it's to expose some of those roots so that it will grow faster. We don't do that anymore now.
- WN: You don't do that anymore?
- LN: No, because when you trim off those leaves, you can see the roots on the tip of the crowns or the slips.
- WN: So they discovered later that it doesn't matter if you trim it or not?
- LN: That's right. I think so.
- WN: You said you used a special knife?
- LN: Yes.
- WN: What do you mean by "special?"
- LN: Well, you can just hold the crown and get a knife and just slice the tip already because it's so short already. When you break off the crown from the fruit, you can just get it off easily. Some of them have a little stem on it, you just cut the stem off.
- WN: You're talking about the bottom of the crown near the fruit or the top of the crown?

LN: Bottom of the crown. But the slips have nubs on it so we have to cut off the nubs.

WN: I see.

LN: It's hard to describe how the knife was made because my father made it. The company didn't furnish that, no.

WN: What about the other girls that were doing the same thing? How did they get their knife?

LN: They all had the same kind. Japanese word they used to call it "oshigiri". It's something oshigiri. The slips [are] more tough than the crown so it's dangerous to just slice it off. [without the special knife].

WN: The name of the knife is oshigiri?

LN: No, the board and knife and all. It's not as dangerous because it's a piece of board.

WN: It's like a cutting board?

LN: No, it's a kind of thick board about a foot long. Then you had a metal brace like over there [across the top of the board]. Then the top of the knife had a hole in it and you screw [the knife] up to that brace over there so when you cut it, the knife doesn't move.

WN: Was the tip of the knife attached to the board?

LN: No, the brace [was attached to the board] so that you just put the slips down and just cut it.

WN: It's like those paper cutters, then?

LN: Yes, but then paper cutters, well, the knife is on the edge of the board, but this is in the center of the board.

WN: I see. You cut just one slip at a time?

LN: Yes.

WN: Did most of the women and the girls do that?

LN: Yes, we all did the same thing. All nationalities did the same thing.

WN: How did you get paid for that work?

LN: By the amount of work you did.

WN: So you got paid piecework?

LN: Piecework like 55 cents for the crown per thousand and 65 cents for the slips and 75 cents for the suckers.

WN: Why did you get the most for suckers?

LN: Oh, they more tough. That, too, we had to cut the tip off and peel some of the leaves off and they much [bigger than the slips or crowns]. (The suckers also have less leaves. We don't use suckers for planting anymore).

WN: Did you have to bundle it yourself?

LN: No, we don't bundle. We just stacked it up high. So we would stack a hundred and put a marker on it. Another hundred and put a marker on it. Then we count.

WN: Stack it just on the road?

LN: Yes, those plants [were] all scattered in the wide-open space so as we work along, my mother would cut, my brothers would trim and I stack it up, or my brother and I would just trim first and then I'll stack it up and count it. (The slips had to be dried out in the sun.)

WN: What was your father doing?

LN: My father (plowed the field). [The] plow was driven by a horse. (He held two handles of the plow and guided the horse. That was a real tough job. He used to work 10 hours a day).

WN: The kind of work that you did, was that mostly done by families like yours?

LN: Yes, there was no time limit. You can go early in the morning and go home whatever time you wanted (because we worked on incentive basis).

WN: So you didn't get paid by the hour at all?

LN: Not on those plants. (Laughs)

WN: Okay, do you remember any other jobs that you did in Lanai?

LN: Well, all they had was only pineapple actually.

WN: Oh, no, I mean out in the field.

LN: When I [became] 12 years old [we were given a] bango---(it was a number which identified ourselves). I worked with the men cutting the crowns off from the pineapple. The men would pick the pineapple, load 'em up in the bag, bring 'em all to the roadside and then I cut off the crowns.

WN: Do you remember how you got paid for cutting off the crowns?

LN: That was more incentive at the time. (Interruption by another person in the room. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: We were talking about cutting off the crowns.

LN: We used to have about 10 men picking the fruits. They would bring it out to the row then I would cut the crowns off and then there were some other men just behind of me coming to load those pineapples in the boxes. I cannot remember how I got paid but when I think now, there must be on incentive basis because we work really hard.

WN: Did you have to load the pine after you cut the crowns off? Did you have to load the pines into the box?

LN: No, that was not my job. My job was only just to cut the crowns off from the pineapple.

WN: Someone else graded [sized] the pines too?

LN: (We didn't grade the pineapples in those days. It didn't matter what size fruit we put in the boxes. We just mixed them up). We used to have wooden boxes that about a dozen fruit can go in. Then the truck would come from the back and the men would load it on the (flatbed) truck.

WN: What would you do with the crowns?

LN: Those crowns later on are loaded on the truck and brought out through the open space in the camp.

WN: Did your brothers get bango also?

LN: No, I don't think so. I don't think they went out in the field to work. Only during the summer they went with my mother and [helped out].

WN: Did you work only in the summers?

LN: Only in the summers.

WN: Do you remember what [hoe hana] was like?

LN: That job was a really tiring job. There was no such thing as weed killers. So much grass, not like now. So much grass that we dreaded summer coming. [We got] blisters all over our hand and that's a back-breaking job. (Laughs).

WN: So of all the jobs, you didn't like that?

LN: No, I didn't like but I guess we were forced to because there's no other job [after the fruit was harvested] and didn't have that

many workers there, too. Way back during the summer, boys from the University of Hawaii on Oahu used to come down to work, too. They picked pineapple in the sacks, in the bags.

WN: Did you get any rest breaks when you were out there?

LN: No, only lunch [time].

WN: What kind of clothes did you wear when you were out?

LN: It's not much different from now because we had to protect ourselves. Those pineapple leaves, the points are very dangerous. They're very sharp and if you get an eye poke and you don't have a doctor's care right away, you might go blind from infection. Now we are protected with screen goggles. The workers wear screen goggles but when I was 12 years old, we didn't have no such thing.

WN: Did you have goggles at all?

LN: No, no goggles at the time. Thank God, [nobody got hurt] but it's just scary to think of how we used to work at the time with no goggles.

WN: So when you were 12 years old, what things did you wear?

LN: Oh, regular long sleeve shirt, long pants. We have to wear another covering pants made of canvas. Shoes. Gloves.

WN: What kind of shoes did you wear?

LN: Those days was tabi.

WN: What were the tabis made of?

LN: They were made from denim cloth. (The soles were made of rubber.)

WN: So did that protect you from the sharp needles?

LN: The tabis, [yes]. But we were more concerned with protecting the face than the feet. There were lots of centipedes in those days. But not anymore. I guess it's because of the chemicals in the spray).

WN: Okay, and gloves?

LN: My mother used to sew our gloves. Even the tabis, there was a man who used to sew.

WN: How about on your head?

LN: Oh, we had a kerchief and hat, straw hat.

WN: So that must have been hot then?

LN: No, you don't realize that it's hot because we're working hard, (and there's wind and breeze).

WN: You mentioned that [the lunas] used to come around on horses?

LN: We used to have one gang luna but then there used to be another foreman [higher up than the gang luna]. They used to come on horses. The gang luna is always with us. He has to keep the record, (and assign and direct our work).

WN: Did the foreman come often?

LN: Oh, yes. (Laughs)

WN: What were your thoughts about when you saw him coming on his horse?

LN: The way we respected them. We [were] afraid of them (because we were so young and they looked so strict and tough).

WN: When you were out in the fields, were there any difficult parts or easy parts of the field? Were there parts of the field that you didn't want to work in?

LN: (There were easy and difficult parts, but we had no choice).

WN: How about the first crop as compared to ratoon crop? Which one did you enjoy [working in]?

LN: Oh, the first crop, the plant crop.

WN: Why do you say that?

LN: It's easier to walk through, that's the main thing. There's not much fruit as the ratoon crops. Ratoons have more fruits. (Because of this the plants tend to fall into the rows, making it more difficult to walk through the lines. Sometimes you have to dig for the fruit underneath the plants.)

WN: Everything is pineapple, right in Lanai?

LN: Yes.

WN: When you were young, were there any other jobs that you could have gone to or did you know of anyone who worked something other than pineapple?

LN: Well, there was a ranch camp. Some people raised cattle. That's the only thing.

WN: How about for women like laundry?

LN: Those days there were lots of Filipino bachelors and my mother and all the ladies [took] in laundry. I used to help in that too.
(Laughs)

WN: Do you remember if the Depression affected anything like the amount of pine being produced or anything like that?

LN: I wasn't aware of it. I was too young to think about that.

WN: How about during the war? What do you remember about working during wartime?

LN: Not very much on Lanai. I remember working while it was slack. I think they stopped (work for) a little while, (and preparation was down to emergency. But it only lasted for a short time -- I think less than a month. People weren't excited or afraid at all, because there were no military bases on Lanai -- so we didn't really know what war was).

WN: Did you notice less workers there?

LN: No, it's because the plantation just stopped working for a while.

WN: Can you tell me why you decided to leave Lanai in 1945?

LN: Because of my children's sake too. They would have better schooling out here [in Whitmore], more opportunity. Because when you're in Lanai and the children grow up, to further their education they all have to go somewhere else. Then that way you will be separated from your children all the time and it's a costly thing, too. I was raised only in the country. I thought maybe my children can have a little better life.

WN: By the time you decided to make the move from Lanai, you had had all six of your children? No, you had four of your children?

LN: Yes.

WN: Okay, so you left Lanai by choice and not by your husband being transferred or anything like that?

LN: No, he wanted to have himself transferred, but they did not give him one because they needed him down there, but then....

WN: But he did eventually manage to get a transfer?

LN: No, he lost his years of service.

WN: Oh, he lost... He quit then?

LN: That's right, because he couldn't get a transfer. Another thing is that before we came here we stayed in Maui for a little while. But it wasn't the place for us so we moved over here [to Oahu].

WN: Where in Maui?

LN: We stayed in Puunene.

WN: You lived on the sugar plantation?

LN: No, no but then I didn't like it there.

WN: Why didn't you like it?

LN: It's just the feeling that I didn't like it. I thought that wasn't the place for us.

WN: Was it because there wasn't any pineapple?

LN: No.

WN: Did you feel that you wanted to stay in pineapple?

LN: No, no, that wasn't the reason why. But eventually my husband came out to look for job here and he met his former manager [from Lanai] in Honolulu and he said, "Why not go back to pineapple again?" He's the one that brought us to Wahiawa. He suggested coming to Wahiawa. (That person was the manager of Dole's Wahiawa pineapple plantation at the time.)

WN: So when you came to [Wahiawa], you had really no idea where you were going to live or what type of work you were going to do?

LN: That's right, but then all our friends encouraged us to come here. But it was my choice to come out here first. My husband wanted to go to Maui because (he grew up there and his parents lived there).

WN: Okay, moving back a little bit to Lanai again. You know, Lanai was bought by Dole in about 1923, okay, and then so you were there between 1927 and 1945, do you remember any kind of change that you noticed on Lanai between 1927 and 1945?

LN: I think I was---I moved to Lanai earlier than that [late 1926].

WN: Okay. So that was when Lanai was just starting in pineapple?

LN: Not exactly just started. Started much earlier, much earlier but I....

WN: So it didn't, it didn't really seem like they were just starting?

LN: No, although they didn't have as much pineapples as they do now. All those fields was not that big an area.

WN: Did they expand the fields while you were there?

LN: Yes, they did because they invented all those machinery and had bigger trucks [and equipment].

WN: Did they have the fruit harvesting machines?

LN: They had it, yes. [Dole experimented with a number of harvesting machines before 1947].

WN: Do you remember the change from carrying [the fruit] on the back to working with the harvesting machine?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

LN: Yes.

WN: Was that a sudden change? Were you surprised when it came out?

LN: Everybody was. (Laughs) After I got married and had my children, I didn't go back to work for some time, some years. I wasn't one of the first to work with those harvesters.

WN: How different was the work after the harvester came out?

LN: Oh, much easier. It's not that backbreaking. (Laughs) The harvester is on the truck and the truck is going so there's no such thing as saying you're tired. You just stand up all day and no taking breaks. We just have to follow and do the job as best as we can.

WN: What happens when you started falling behind?

LN: We try not to and so we work extra hard.

WN: When you were moving from Lanai to Wahiawa, what did you bring along with you from Lanai?

LN: Everything that I had. (Laughs)

WN: How about things like furniture?

LN: Yes. We used to have those boats commuting back and forth because very few people rode the plane. I don't know whether we had [passenger] planes or not but everybody used the boat.

WN: Okay. You decided to move here to Wahiawa. That was in 1945?

LN: Uh huh. [Yes].

WN: In 1950 you started as a seasonal worker?

LN: Yes.

WN: When you first came, did you think that you would be working out here in the fields?

LN: I expected to work later on when the children grew up a little. Because we were forced to. (I had to work to make a living for the family because there was no work for my husband when it rained.) Sometimes [he would work] only two days a week, three days a week. That's why it was hard on the family. (And so if I worked, it helped a lot.)

WN: When you first applied for the job, were there any tests that you had to take?

LN: No.

WN: How about physical?

LN: That came later. To become a non-regular, then we had to go through a physical.

WN: The seasonals didn't have to take a physical?

LN: No.

WN: On your application, do you remember the types of questions they asked?

LN: About your age and your illness, your education.

WN: How about if you were pregnant or not?

LN: Maybe there was (Laughs) but I don't remember.

WN: When you started as a seasonal, what jobs did you do?

LN: Picking pineapples, weeding....stripping slips. That was about all women did those days.

WN: When you were working out in Wahiawa with the fruit harvester, were there men working alongside you?

LN: Not at first. Only our supervisor, the conveyer operator and the truck driver [were men].

WN: Did you work with students?

LN: Yes, I did. I became a temporary supervisor then. During the summer we had a lot of students coming to work.

WN: Did you have any rest breaks at all in the fields?

LN: No, only lunch time.

WN: How about when the machines had to change truck?

LN: Oh, yes, that's the time [to rest].

WN: So what did you do when you had that break?

LN: That's when those who were thirsty go out to have a drink of water or get a bite of snack.

WN: How long did it take to change truck?

LN: Two to three minutes.

WN: Lunch time, did you eat together?

LN: Yes, we all ate together.

WN: What did you talk about while you were eating? I mean, did you talk about the work or did you talk about other things?

LN: Just about everything that women talk about. (Laughs)

WN: Did you think of anything to help make the time go faster?

LN: While working? No, all I know is (to do my work). (And) the time goes (by) fast (because we're) really working. (Sometimes I think the time goes by too fast.)

WN: Do you remember when you first heard about the union? Did they come around to the camps?

LN: No, they used to hold [meetings] on the company property [the truck shed by the dispatch office] (or at the ball park in Whitmore).

WN: Do you remember when you first began to be covered by the union benefits?

LN: I cannot remember.

WN: I mean when you were seasonal. You were a seasonal from 1950 to 1962, do you remember getting any kind of union benefits at that time?

LN: (Seasonals were not covered by the union). I don't know what year the union started. [Seasonal and non-regular field workers first began receiving benefits in 1965.]

LN: Nineteen forty-six. Do you remember anything about any walkouts or grievances?

LN: Yes, we did have. We went on strike, too. Was very hard on us.

WN: How so?

LN: When the husbands go one week without pay, that's very hard, hardship on the family.

WN: Do you remember what strike this was?

LN: Nineteen forty-seven, I remember. My children were young. I had five at that time. We were new here. It was rough. (Laughs)

WN: Did your husband picket?

LN: Yes.

WN: Until 1972 women were getting 10 cents less pay than the men got. Were you aware of that?

LN: Yes.

WN: How did you feel about that?

LN: Nothing because I thought we was a woman. I thought men were more superior (Laughs) than women so they deserve it.

WN: When you went from a seasonal to a non-regular [1962], your pay changed?

LN: Yes, great difference.

WN: You mean your hourly pay?

LN: Hourly pay, yes.

WN: How much more days of work did you have as a non-regular as compared to seasonal?

LN: Seasonals, when the plantation jobs come slack, are laid off, but non-regulars are kept. They're kept on the job until it comes to the point [when it is so slow that] only the regulars are needed on the job. Then they [non-regulars] are laid off for a little while and they're rehired again, but the seasonal stays home much longer. Way back, the seasonals were hired only during the summer.

WN: So when you're a non-regular, did they call you up and tell you that there's work?

LN: Yes.

WN: You have to be available?

LN: Yes.

WN: Whereas [when you were a] seasonal, how did that work?

LN: Most of the time seasonals are called back during the harvest, during the peak season. (Then after the peak harvesting period ends, which is during the summer, students who are working go back to school. But the plantation is still busy so the remaining seasonals are kept on the job as needed. Whenever other jobs are needed and we are shorthanded, seasonals who are available are called back temporarily. But non-regulars are called back before seasonals are. Now non-regulars are only laid off for a short time.)

WN: Do you know why that's so [the non-regulars are staying on longer]?

LN: [We export] fresh fruit now. (Even after peak harvesting for canning is over, fresh fruit export operation goes on the whole year around).

WN: In 1969 you became a regular. Can you tell me the difference between the non-regular and the regular workers?

LN: A regular is a permanent worker and gets more benefits. The non-regular and the regular get paid the same but for job [openings], the regulars have first chance.

WN: When you're a regular and there isn't any work, what happens?

LN: The company finds some [work to do].

WN: But you're never laid off?

LN: No, other than having rain out, always have job.

WN: When you became a luna, how were you notified that you were going to be a luna?

LN: You mean a permanent luna? Mrs. Laura Young [Dole Personnel Director] notified me. She came out in the field and personally told me.

WN: Did you apply to be one?

LN: No.

WN: Were there other female lunas?

LN: [There were] ladies besides [myself] that time. (We were the first three women to become permanent lunas here on the Wahiawa plantation.)

WN: While you were working, who was watching your children?

- LN: When I first started working in the field, I took two of my children to a babysitter.
- WN: Over here [in Whitmore]?
- LN: Yes. Later on, when they grew up, it was no problem because the older ones were where they could help me a lot.
- WN: Was the babysitter somebody you knew or...
- LN: Yes, uh huh.
- WN: Were there any day care centers?
- LN: No.
- WN: You said that you had to go to work in 1950. Did you consider the income that you got from working an important part of the family budget?
- LN: Oh, yes. (Laughs) Made a lot of difference.
- WN: Who handled the money?
- LN: Financial matters. I did. (Laughs)
- WN: You did. So your husband would give you his [pay]?
- LN: Yes. It takes two [of us] to budget but I did the most.
- WN: How about important financial decisions like to buy, say, a washing machine, TV, or car, who made that decision?
- LN: (I did, because my husband always left everything up to me. I was always in the position where I knew whether or not we could afford or manage it.)
- WN: Were you doing all the cooking and the cleaning and the laundry, all the housework?
- LN: Yes.
- WN: When you first came to Oahu, you were in K-5? [Kipapa-5 Camp]
- LN: Yes, K-5.
- WN: How was, say, K-5 compared to Lanai?
- LN: K-5 was such a country place, way up close to the mountains. Everything was so inconvenient.
- WN: What do you mean inconvenient?

LN: The stores were so far away and not many people had cars. We had one but when it rained, the roads are so muddy and so slippery. Cannot get out from there. Doctors are so far away. Very inconvenient.

WN: The fields that you worked in, was it close to K-5?

LN: [Yes], just in back of our yard. Very close.

WN: Where was the dispatch office that you reported to in the morning?

LN: In K-5.

WN: Was it near your house?

LN: I did not go work in the pineapple fields when I was in K-5.

WN: Oh, I see. [Mrs. Nouchi and her husband came to K-5 in 1945, but she did not begin working until 1950, when they were at Whitmore.]

When you moved to Whitmore [in 1947], was your K-5 house transferred over?

LN: Yes, transferred over here.

WN: So when they were ready to transfer you from K-5, did you come straight to Whitmore?

LN: No, we stayed in a place called K-1 [Kipapa-1 Camp] for a few months.

WN: How did you feel about moving from place to place?

LN: It wasn't an easy thing because [the] children were so young.

WN: In the K-5 Camp, were there stores and....

LN: No, no, no stores. (There were peddlers, and we had a car, so we also went to Wahiawa to shop.)

WN: How about schools?

LN: No. The children went to the Kipapa School (in Waipio. When we moved to Whitmore, they went to Heleman School which was located in Brodie-2 Camp. Later when Brodie-2 was torn down, they moved Heleman School to Whitmore).

WN: How far was Brodie-2 from your house?

LN: Oh, five miles. (The children walked five miles.)

WN: As you look back, would you have preferred to work or would you have preferred to stay home and be a housewife?

LN: I rather work. I love to work. I enjoy working.

WN: You mean you enjoy working in the pineapple fields?

LN: Maybe that's the only kind of job that I can do because I didn't further my education after [ninth grade]. I accepted what I can do.

WN: Do you think that if you were able to further your education you would have gone into something else?

LN: I never thought it that way. (Laughs) I was so busy raising the children.

WN: Did you ever think that if there wasn't a pineapple industry, what you would have ended up doing?

LN: The truth is I wanted to futher my education but then since I got married early and children came along it was so busy that I never did think anything about it. It never came to my mind because I just wanted my children to have something better than what I had. That's the only thing that kept me going.

WN: Did you encourage your children at all to go into pineapple?

LN: Well, I wanted them to find out what it is to earn honest money, hard-working money. I forced them to go and try it. After they had their schooling over, not one of my children came back to work for the pineapple company. (Laughs)

WN: Did that disappoint you?

LN: No. That's the way I wanted it.

WN: So you wanted them to just try it?

LN: Yes. Those who didn't want to work in the field had to work in the cannery. They all know what it is, what kind of job it is.

WN: You say honest work. What do you mean by honest work?

LN: (The pineapple fields were my children's first experience to earn their own money in the hot sun, rain and dust. I wanted them to find out what work is like, and that it is not that easy to earn money. There is a luna watching over you and you must do your work right. You cannot cheat, lie or become lazy because you are going to be rated for your job performance after you go back to school. This rating would be the most important record for them in the future. So I always told my children to work honestly. I always thought that a person's first job is the most important. I told all my student workers that too.)

WN: What would you have thought if one of your children decided that they wanted to work like you, [in the pineapple fields] permanently?

LN: (I would tell them to better themselves. But then, if that was their only choice, I won't say anything. Pineapple work might be the best for them. It's better than loafing around.)

WN: So what do you think of the pine industry as an employer as you look back?

LN: In what way?

WN: Was it good to you?

LN: Oh, yes, because I got a chance to work for this company, my husband and I could support our children and educate them and they are where they are now. I'm very thankful because it's a honest working job, good paying job, too.

WN: Besides the money, did you gain anything else from working?

LN: Yes, (very much. It broadened my mind and I got myself educated because I worked with all types of people). Understanding the living conditions of every person makes me realize how fortunate I am. At least even if I have struggled, I have a very nice family.

WN: Do you feel you gained any kind of skills?

LN: I wouldn't call it skills. But, I used to be a very timid person then....it came to the point now that I really can stand on my two feet and face anything. It made me very strong. Get to know more about the people in many different ways. I think I'm very lucky. (Laughs)

WN: You're still working now, [as a luna in the fields]?

LN: Yes.

WN: How has the worker changed?

LN: The ladies under me are very nice people and (do their best to do a good job). Through my experience of working as a laborer, myself, I went and corrected their ways of working to make it easier. The way I saw each worker, their habits make it more complicated for them. I try to make it easier for them and I try to correct it. At first some of the ladies was against me but I say, "Try it this way. It could be much easier."

(I try to make it so that we can work under favorable and pleasant conditions--and still work hard. Most of my workers are elder adults, and they have worked quite long for Dole Company. They have worked under other lunas before me too.)

END OF SIDE TWO

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WN: Do you think it's more difficult or more easy now to get a job in the pine fields or is it the same?

LN: I think it's the same. (When we were busy, the company is in demand for labor. People are hired. Many drop out because they cannot take or do the job).

WN: What do you think the future of pineapple is in Hawaii?

LN: That's very hard for me to say because Dole has expanded down to the Philippines, Taiwan and I really cannot see that but then sometimes it makes you wonder.

WN: Would you like to see pineapple continued?

LN: Oh, yes. Maybe I'm wrong but if the young generation now are all furthering their education--they go on to higher education--they go into different types of jobs. Whereas with the uneducated or unskilled, what type of job do they have? I wonder sometimes. (Hawaii is not the same Hawaii of my younger days. Girls were not supposed to further their education beyond grade school--the first generation didn't believe in that. Although there were exceptions....)

WN: So with more young people furthering their education and young people complaining that it's a tough job, what type of workers do you think in the future will be doing this type of work?

LN: Well, it's already here, all those people coming from the Philippines. They taking over already.

WN: Mrs. Nouchi, what are your plans after you retire?

LN: I haven't thought about that yet because there's so much I want to do. Right now, I'm still enjoying working. (Laughs) Even if I retire, I won't be kept idle because I have such a large family.

END OF INTERVIEW

**WOMEN WORKERS
in Hawaii's
Pineapple Industry**

Volume I

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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